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ABSTRACT

Institutional governance in Canada is legislatively apportioned to the individual provinces. Each of the provincial legislatures has established government departments to direct the operation of post secondary education. Boards of Trustees, a well-established tradition in the United States, do not exist uniformly for all types of post secondary institutions in Canada. Brief overviews are given of the governance structures in British Columbia, Alberta, and Quebec. Anne Stevenson, chairperson of Cariboo College Council in Kamloops, addresses selected governance issues from the vantage point of a lay board member. Stevenson reviews school district representation; who is allowed to vote; principal, faculty, and student participation; budget and educational priorities; and labor relations. Gary Dohla, President of the Mount Royal College Students Association in Calgary, discusses his view of institutional representation in college governance, with an emphasis on the positive input provided by faculty and students. A president's perspective on community college governance is presented by George Wootton of Douglas College in New Westminster. He attempts to point out both the positive and negative aspects of faculty and student involvement in governance. (Author/AH)

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WOULD NEW BOARD STRUCTURES IMPROVE COLLEGE GOVERNANCE?

A FORUM TO EXAMINE CANADIAN EXPERIENCE*

Abram C. Konrad
University of Alberta

The major purpose of this presentation is to draw upon Canadian experience to focus upon the structural context of governing boards in postsecondary non-university education. Although we shall not describe in detail any one of the provincial systems, we will attempt to identify the common as well as some of the unique features of these systems. My comments will establish the background against which specific issues can be explored. Each of the forum members, in turn, will provide the views of a lay board member, a student board member and a college president. Hopefully, each of you will provide an even greater sense of reality to our session by drawing specifically upon your own experiences and sharing these with us in the interaction session.

Legislative authority. In any discussion of educational structures in Canada, explicit reference must be made to Section 93 of the British North America Act which gives complete control of education to the provinces. Although federal involvement in postsecondary education is substantial, especially in technical/vocational and manpower programs, legal responsibility for education resides in provincial legislatures. There are no federal agencies specifically designed to effect decision-making in the community colleges; provincial legislatures are solely responsible for

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meeting the educational needs of society.

Provincial legislative bodies may be regarded as the most comprehensive structures for decision-making in postsecondary education. Public policies regarding societal goals, provincial and institutional structures, and fiscal priorities develop from the debate within the political forums in each province. And these forums are subject to all of the pressures and influences that are common to political structures.

Departmental structures. Each of the provincial legislatures has established government departments to direct the operation of postsecondary education. Legislative members are elected; departmental officers are appointed. In each province, civil servants in a government department carry the responsibility for the overall planning, development and management of college operations. They specify standards of performance and provide coordination among the various institutions within a system. Compared with college and university operations in the United States, it would appear that college operations are more centralized in Canada.

Institutional boards. The tradition of boards of trustees is well-established in North America. Interestingly, however, governing boards do not exist uniformly for all types of postsecondary institutions in Canada. Only universities have boards of trustees in each of the provinces; technical institutes, generally, are operated directly by provincial departments of government in each province. A variety of arrangements obtain for the community colleges, and I will review three

of these briefly.

The college board (council) of each public college in British Columbia is constituted by a combination of appointive and elective procedures. Government appointees constitute a minority on a board; the majority of members on a governing board are trustees who represent local school districts cooperating in the operation of the college. The trustees serve on school boards through non-partisan elections and one member from each cooperating school district is selected to represent that district on the college board. The term of office for all board members in British Columbia is one year, although reappointments may occur. The college principal and bursar attend meetings of the board, but they do not hold membership on the board. No institutional representatives serve as members of the college boards in British Columbia.

Each of the public colleges operates under the direction of a board of governors in Alberta. The board consists of five lay members appointed by government, the college president, a faculty elected by the faculty and a student selected by the students. Lay members serve three-year terms and are subject to reappointment; institutional members serve one-year terms which also may be renewed. No role distinctions are made between lay and institutional members.

College boards in Quebec also are composed of appointed and elected members, as well as of external and internal members. Nineteen persons serve on the CEGEP board: five lay members appointed by government, four parents of students elected by the parents, four faculty

elected by the faculty, two students selected by the students, two additional persons selected by the institution, the academic dean and the president. In summary, nine external members and ten internal members constitute a college board in Quebec.

Against this very sketchy background, we will now invite three participants in Canadian college boards to identify selected governance issues. Anne Stevenson, chairperson of Cariboo College Council in Kamloops, will address the question from the vantage point of a lay board member; Gary Dohla, President of the Mount Royal College Students Association in Calagary, will provide an institutional answer; and, finally, we will get the presidential perspectives from George Wootton of Douglas College in New Westminster. Following the three presentations, we will welcome your participation in an interaction on the forum question.

HURDLES TO OVERCOME

Anne Stevenson
Cariboo College

Community colleges have set new and exciting directions in education in British Columbia. The Department of Education recently received the report of a Task Force which was established to assess the needs and aspirations of the people in British Columbia in developing all facets of community colleges. Many recommendations have already been implemented; others are being assessed by the Department of Education. A democracy demands more of its people than any other form of government. Nevertheless, on the way to perfection there are hurdles to overcome.

School District Representation

A problem, and sometimes a highly emotional one, facing college boards in British Columbia is the place of school trustees on college boards. (In B.C., college boards are called councils and board members are referred to as counsellors.) There are board members who feel strongly that school trustees must be part of the college board because of school board budget control, and school trustees are able to give the grass roots input. Without the school trustee, the college board would become remote from school districts, especially in rural areas. Then there are those school trustees on college boards who are already deeply involved with school board commitments. To take on another area involving as much commitment as that of a school trustee is impossible

for many, or taken reluctantly by others. To which body does the school trustee owe his/her allegiance? School trustees think it should be to the school board. College boards think the college should occupy enough time and attention to perform a dedicated service. As colleges grow in number and size it becomes increasingly difficult to co-opt school trustees to sit on college boards. The result is, this area of service is frequently performed unwillingly. Trustees hoping the stint will not last long. Interior colleges serve large geographic areas which means the school trustee members of college boards must add more time away from business, home and family, because college board meetings frequently mean an overnight stay. The solution to school board representation may be:

1) Continue as at present for those school trustees who feel trustee involvement is important to the direction colleges will take.
2) Permit school boards to choose a knowledgable, interested person, who is not a trustee, but has the confidence of the school board to represent the grass roots of the school districts.
3) Election at large within the school district.

Who Votes?

Another controversial issue that B.C. college boards face is the acceptance or the rejection of the Task Force's recommendation that boards should be more representative of not only the whole college region, but also of the college community itself, that is administration, students and faculty.

Principal. Certain board members question the rights of the principal to vote -- the principal who is carefully chosen by the board to reflect the philosophy of the board, and who is the chief executive officer. The old cry of "who runs the college, the board or the principal?" is an argument frequently used against the principal's voting powers. If a vital issue has a split vote and the vote of the principal decides the issue, those members opposed to the principal's voting rights are convinced that too much power is wielded by him. This argument is refuted by stating that any crucial question that is decided by one vote should go back for re-examination. The solution may be to give the principal the choice of exercising the right to vote, or not, but he/she should not be incriminated if the choice is to forego the privilege of voting. He/she may not wish to injure public relations by negating a proposal on which faculty and/or students have spent much time and energy. Chances are that anything of great moment would require a substantial majority -- declared by policy -- or would have been thoroughly investigated long before it appeared on the board agenda.

Faculty. Instead of sitting at the board table giving vocal input, to which the board actively, or inactively, listens, the faculty representative with voting powers must take responsibility for his/her actions. Because of the direction given by the faculty their representative must reflect the concerns of the faculty. The contribution given by the voting faculty member opens another dimension to both college board and Faculty Association. In discussions of the

budget the faculty representative is involved in establishing priorities concerning facilities and programmes for the whole college region. In this decision-making experience the faculty representative's own discipline is of little consequence. He/she must be controlled first by the philosophy of the college and, second, by the needs of all faculties (including Continuing Education) of the whole college region. Added to this responsibility the faculty member must justify his/her stand to the Faculty Association. The faculty member thus becomes a much more useful member to board and a good liaison for faculty. Though some faculty members are eager to have a vote on the board, there are some who state emphatically that they would rather attend board meetings as critics. They fear that working in close harmony on the board would spoil the adversary attitude which they feel is necessary at the bargaining table. If the Faculty Association were given the choice to vote or not to vote, who would win?

Students. In spite of publicity to the contrary, the student is not always given the first consideration at the various levels of the educational system. Colleges are uniquely equipped to recognize the value of the student's input in decision-making because of the numbers of mature students and because of the variety of programmes in a comprehensive college. Though students have been asking for a voice (vote), there is apathy in participating in college affairs, serving on student council, working on student newspaper. A vote on the board will give students some clout in the decision-making

process which will hopefully interest the whole student body. The board gains additional insight into the perception of the needs and aspirations of students. The students must, like faculty, establish the priorities of the whole college region, with a limited budget. Students have been able to voice opinions at board meetings, but this experience is vastly different from accepting the responsibility of voting for a library or a gymnasium and defending the vote -- considering the priorities in the budget for the board as well as for fellow students. The student is thus held accountable for this decision and the board learns the priorities of students.

In a multi-campus college which provides a large Continuing Education programme in the populated and remote areas -- what students should vote? Full-time students? And/or any student anywhere in the college region, taking any course for any length of time? Another policy problem for the board to ponder.

Budget and Educational Priorities

The preparation of the budget is a difficult task for both administration and the college board; perhaps the most difficult aspect is the need to establish priorities, guided by the philosophy of the board. Will first or second year university transfer programmes take precedence over upgrading and remedial courses? Will the academic faculty and students be denied courses to enable the college to fund, properly, counselling and guidance as well as indepth upgrading programmes -- necessary in a proclaimed open door college? Or will those doors be closed to enable the money to go to an extension of existing programmes?

A college philosophy that has promised to meet the needs of the vast College region may force the board into expensive off-campus courses that small communities, and especially the Native people, are asking for. Can a board justify the cost of a six-person enrolment in an English class remote from campus, but an enthusiastic class in a community which receives very few of the benefits from the college enjoyed by students and the general public who live close to the main campus? These are difficult decisions boards must face in a recession cycle.

Using the expertise on faculty, may the college dare plan for future electronic packaged programmes to be delivered to remote areas, to ranchers and their families? To miners, cowboys, teachers? The needs of these people have been neglected except for a very few short Continuing Education vocational courses. The cost of "service to the community" under a tight budget is a growing problem and the establishing of priorities is a nightmare.

College boards must put pressure on the Department of Education through the B.C. Association of Colleges to ask for definite plans for provincially oriented courses. The right course in the right college to avoid waste of human and financial resources, researching courses without direction from the Department that such a programme would be seriously considered in that college. A provincial plan for provincially oriented courses is required to avoid wasteful duplication of time and money. Wasteful duplication of services must be avoided -- for example, universities competing with colleges, particularly in the field of adult education.

The spheres of influence, the expertise of both levels of education, must be clearly defined to avoid wasteful duplication of services. The functions of each must also be researched so that colleges and universities are not in competition; those areas throughout the province, cities and rural communities that are best served by colleges should be restricted to colleges. At the same time colleges should never aspire to become little universities. Boards should never forget that they are dedicated to the philosophy of comprehensive colleges, where all courses have equal status, be they academic, career or vocational.

Labour Relations

The process of bargaining must be understood by board members. They may appear at the bargaining table, but even if capable they should not act as negotiators. Emotions must be controlled, no matter what the provocation in this bargaining game. Board members, especially new members, must be made aware that liaison must be maintained so that quickly, without hard feelings, and in the interests of student education, the previous climate of co-operation will prevail. The adversary relationship should be regarded as a competition of wits, not a confrontation of principles; goodwill must prevail. If negotiations end in strike action, so be it.

VIEWS OF STUDENTS AND FACULTY

Gary J. Dohla
Mount Royal College

A board structure incorporating institutional representation, I believe, does improve the governance of the college.

Student and faculty members of the board can provide a more complete institutional point-of-view than could the administration by themselves. Also, the Students Council or Faculty Association have the opportunity of hearing from their respective representative of particular board action, thus, the Students Council or Faculty Association are possibly more amenable to particular actions than if they hear about these from the administration.

There is also the point that students or faculty members can bring to the attention of the public members how any action or inaction of the board will affect either association or a segment of its membership. In this way they are very much like a sounding board of the people who will be affected by the adoption and implementation of a particular policy. The administrators report on reaction they perceive but, as was stated earlier, the students or faculty through their representatives on the board can relay a more specific reaction to policy.

In my capacity as a member of the board and as president of the Students Association, I am able to give a less generalized statement as to how policy will affect the Students Association.

I am in a position of being as aware as is possible of what the board is doing and planning, plus of what direction the Students

Association is taking or could take. I do not think a conflict of interest exists or that the confidentiality of the board is endangered.

Another aspect of having student and faculty members on the Board of Governors is that they are made aware, through contact with the public members of the board, what the public perspective is. This is important because I believe public board members are the furthest removed from the college community and what is happening in that community. They rely primarily on reports from the administration. This, I believe, is an unfortunate situation.

The composition of the board, I believe, should be seven public members, two faculty, two students, and one non-faculty staff member who is not in an administrative position.

I do not think that the president of the college should be a voting member of the board but, rather, that he should attend all board meetings along with other key administrative officers to provide input only.

A PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE ON COLLEGE GOVERNANCE

George C. Wootton
Douglas College

The role of the president of a community college has changed markedly over the last two decades. From a time when the president was the sole "voice" for the institution to the present when all groups directly or indirectly involved with the college want a major and direct say in the running of the college, the president has, by legislation, been the "responsible" person.

Is this change in interest and desire for involvement good or bad? Obviously, no simple answer exists. However, I will briefly develop the case for the positive aspect of the involvement of faculty and students on the college board. In so doing, I will also indicate the negative aspects that can result if care is not taken in clearly indicating the nature of the responsibility while serving on the board.

First, we must be sure that the board understands its role and responsibility. Briefly stated, this is to establish the basic philosophy for the college; to approve basic operating policy; to oversee the expenditure of public and private funds; to ensure that the needs of the various groups involved with the college are met; and finally to interact politically with the various levels of government on behalf of the college.

It has been generally accepted that to do the above, the board should be representative of the community. (In the past, the community

has referred to the external community.) Selection of a board member has been by appointment and/or election, and has been based on the premise that the member should bring to the board the perspective that his/her background allows. A new board member often tries to speak on behalf of his/her group and to vote on issues based on the desires of his/her constituency. A college board cannot be truly effective until the members recognize that they are expected to act and vote on the basis of what is best for the college.

The same rationale holds in the case where representation on the board is extended to the internal community, i.e. faculty and students (or if we truly believe in representation of all the internal groups, then to faculty, students, support staff and administration). Here the board member must, if he or she is to be effective, take even greater care to act as a member of the board who has a student, faculty staff or administrative background, rather than as the spokesman for the particular group from which he/she comes. Care must be taken to ensure that those matters which specifically relate to faculty, support staff, or student welfare or working conditions are left to the various association or union groups to present to the board or committee of the board.

The student, support staff, or faculty member on the board who attempts to relate to the board what is happening in the college from his/her limited perspective is doing a disservice to both the board and the group supposedly being represented. This is not a problem when these individuals, like other members of the board, act on the basis of

the information presented to the board through the various committees of the board and by the various associations and union groups. In this case, their opinions are of great value to the board in attempting to arrive at a decision.

The often-raised question of "conflict of interest" for faculty and support staff is not a problem if the members from these groups act in a manner consistent with that expected of a board member. That is, each decision will be based on what is the best for the college rather than what is best for the specific group. This can cause the members problems with some of the members of their peer group who will not appreciate their position but this is the price that they will have to pay.

The major precaution the board will have to take is to ensure that the role and the authority of the president as the official spokesman for the college and his role as the final authority for the operation of the college are perfectly clear and strongly supported. The president does not attempt to represent any or all groups in the college but makes his recommendations to the board based on input from each of the affected groups. Neither should the faculty, support staff, student or administrative members of the college board be looked on as official spokesmen for their groups. They must be seen as members of the board who have some specific experiences in community college work, the same as other members of the board who have experience with business, industry, minority groups or unions, etc.

If the above guidelines are followed, a successful board should be strengthened, rather than weakened, by the addition of student, faculty, support staff, and administrative members.

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